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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 426th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 24 June 1993, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/59 (continued)

1. Mr. BUTLER (Australia) said that the Committee was at a crucial stage in its development, since General Assembly resolution 47/59 had provided it with new direction only six months after its very existence had seemed to be in question. That resolution was important because it had underscored the fact that the change in international relations had made new opportunities available to the Committee which should foster a new spirit of cooperation. It had also made it clear that the General Assembly believed that the Committee should continue its efforts towards developing cooperation and peace in the Indian Ocean area.

2. Australia accepted the terms of resolution 47/59 and proposed that the Committee should look at a number of issues which, taken together, would constitute the required new alternative approaches to regional cooperation and security in the Indian Ocean area, while maintaining full respect for the Declaration itself and for the work which the Committee had undertaken since the adoption of that instrument. The Committee might concentrate, among other things, on measures of political, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation which could be developed between States of the region and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean. It might also consider the concept of freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean in ways that were in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It might also look at issues concerning the preservation of the region's environment, especially marine pollution and fishing methods. Lastly, it might consider fostering the establishment of a regional security dialogue through the implementation of regional confidence-building measures which would enhance the security of the region and eliminate military and non-military threats.

3. The list of possible issues was not an exhaustive one, but if the Committee was able to identify a number of such areas for discussion, they might form the basis of a broader understanding of the Indian Ocean question. The Committee would thus be adopting the new alternative approach mandated by the General Assembly. The Committee's methodology would then be the opposite of that followed in the past, when it had started with an overarching Declaration and had sought to fill in the building blocks afterwards.

4. It was important now for the Committee to begin to reach agreement on its recommendations to the General Assembly. If an approach such as he had proposed was adopted, the subject of the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, which deserved to be taken seriously by the United Nations, might survive, and the General Assembly might allow the Committee to continue its work. If the Committee did not come forward with new alternative approaches, as requested, the Assembly's view might be that the issue was no longer an important one.

5. Mr. BELIZ (Panama) said that the work of the Committee was very important and of even greater relevance in the post-cold-war era. The opportunity afforded by General Assembly resolution 47/59 should not be allowed to pass, and it was time for the Committee to make headway towards the establishment of the

(Mr. Beliz, Panama)

Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, taking as a basis the various other zones of peace which were being established around the world. Circumstances would never be perfect, and a start had to be made.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.